

Believe in Yourself by **TheMikeWheelers** (jasongracefully)

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Summary:

Eleven comforts Mike when stressed over school.

Believe in Yourself

Sitting on Mike's bed while he had his face planted in a textbook wasn't exactly how Eleven saw her day going.

She was supposed to go out with him to the movies that night, but after a particularly stressful day at school, and finding out that he had completely forgotten a biology test the next day, Mike had called her apologizing profusely for saying he had to call it off. El insisted it was fine, and she'd come over to help him study.

She'd spent countless times helping Mike study before, and he did the same with her, but she never expected to see Mike so overwhelmed when she arrived to his house.

Pale-faced, Mike was running his fingers through his hair, getting shaggy from his refusal to cut it the last few weeks. Notebooks and papers were sprawled all across his bed, with barely enough space for El to sit down. His head was buried into his Biology 101 textbook, simply giving El a quick peck on the cheek with barely a greeting when he saw her before going back to reading.

El was surprised, but didn't think much of it. She simply grabbed a book from off his shelf and started to read herself, figuring when Mike needed her help with something he would ask for it.

Minutes went by, the only sound being Mike's frantic turning of pages, or crinkling his notes when he reached down for them, until eventually the yell from down the stairs from Mike's mother was signalling them for dinner.

Mike ignored the call, slapping shut his textbook and grabbing one of the notebooks from beside him to start flipping through that.

"Mike," El called to her boyfriend, trying to get him to at least acknowledge anything besides his papers in front of him.

"Mhm?" Barely a response.

El rolled her eyes, then focusing on the notebook in his hands, she

felt as blood dripped down to her lips until the book was levitating feet above Mike's reach.

"Hey!"

"Your mom called us for dinner!"

Mike whined, "But I'm not hungry! And I really need to study!"

"I'm sure you can take a break for twenty minutes to eat something," El stood up walk over to where Mike was, sitting next to him and grabbing his hand, "Have you been studying like this since you got home?"

Mike let out a long breath before responding, "Yeah, but it's important! I had no idea the test was tomorrow and now I'm definitely going to fail it!"

Internally El was rolling her eyes, knowing Mike was just being overdramatic. He had straight-A's in the class, he always did his work, he never struggled to understand the material. He was just exaggerating saying he was going to fail. But externally El squeezed his hand tighter and tried to put up the most concerned face she could muster, "It's just one test. I *promise*, no matter what happens it'll be fine. Taking a twenty minute break isn't going to change your grade in the end."

"I know that, but just," Mike let out a long sigh and rubbed the back of his neck, "Every second I'm not studying I just feel more and more overwhelmed. I used to never need to study, but this class is so much harder than every other science class I've had to take, and I'm so scared of doing worse than normal in it. What if I'm not smart enough, El?"

His eyes caught hers for a moment, all the worry and insecurity radiating from within, and El wished she knew how she could take every doubt he had about himself away. She had a lot of superpowers, but letting Mike see himself through her eyes wasn't one of them, "You are fifty times smarter than you think you are, Mike. You're oblivious to just how great you are. This test tomorrow is going to be easy and you're going to do amazing and you're going

to realize all your doubts are the only stupid thing about you.”

A small smile emerged on Mike’s face, and he leaned in to kiss El. A real kiss this time, not a quick peck he barely acknowledged like when she had come in earlier, “I’m sorry I was ignoring you before. I can be such a mouthbreather when I’m stressed. I don’t know why you put up with me, I love you.”

“I put up with you because I love you more,” El teased him, before turning to rest her head on his shoulder, listening as her head rose and fell with his breaths.

“School puts so much pressure on us to do well and achieve everyone’s expectations. It’s not the same for you being homeschooled, it’s like they don’t even see us as individual people there. We’re all just one of the masses, and they ignore everything about us and tell us to get good grades.”

“It’s hard, I know,” El whispered into his shoulder, “But it shouldn’t matter what expectations other people put on you. All that matters is that you do well enough to make yourself happy. And I believe in you, you’re smart and clever and you don’t even realize it. You’re always going to be fine.”

She leaned up to kiss his cheek before returning to resting on his shoulder. Mike wrapped an arm around El then leaned his head on top of hers, the two content with the silence of just listening to each other breathe.

After a few minutes of quiet El broke the silence, “Do you want me to help go over some flashcards with you?”

“Nah, I think I’m fine. I’m just going to read over my notes a few more times and I think I’ll be good.” Mike leaned over to kiss the top of her head before speaking up again, “El?”

“Yeah?”

“I’m sorry for ruining your night with this. You shouldn’t have had to deal with me freaking out like this.”

“It’s fine,” El insisted, “I like spending time with you anyway. And if

you're freaking out I want to be there. I want to help you feel better.”

The two turned towards each other once again and smiled, still squeezing each other's hands as tight as possible.

“I need to head home now,” El spoke up once more, “You can keep studying but you need to promise you're going to go downstairs and eat dinner at some point.”

“El-”

“*Promise me.* Just make sure you've eaten.”

“I promise.” Mike stood up with her, giving her a short-but-tight hug before she left.

Mike honored his promise, as he always did, and after dinner he went back to studying. He read over his notes two more times before passing out all over the papers on his bed.

He took the test the next morning, and when he got his A-grade back a week later, El was the very first person he told. With a smile that Mike believed lit up the sun, she hugged him and whispered into his ear.

“I always believed in you.”